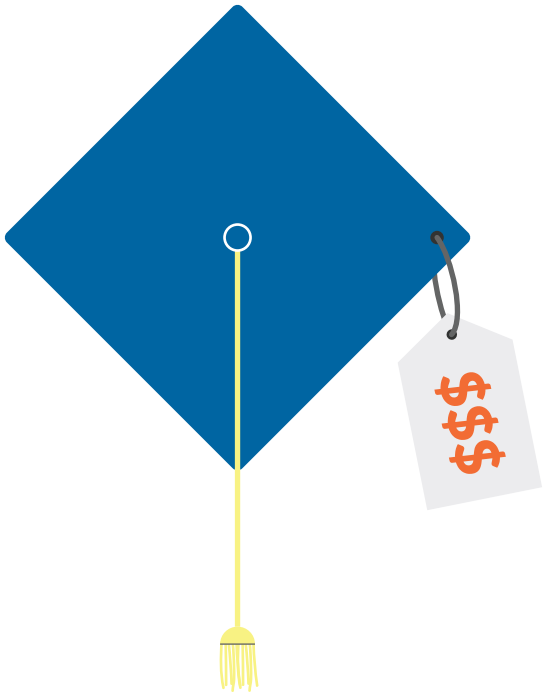
Beyond Tuition, Costs of Teacher Preparation

Descriptive Analytics from the Aspiring Teachers' Financial Burden Survey



May 2021

ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

This report is part of a suite of materials created by WestEd and *Prepared To Teach* during our shared research effort, the Sustainability Project. The work explores sustainability challenges in teacher preparation—and, importantly, promising practices to overcome those challenges.

This report, *Beyond Tuition, Costs of Teacher Preparation: Descriptive Analytics from the Aspiring Teachers' Financial Burden Survey*, provides analyses of income sources, expenses, debt, and work realities from *Prepared To Teach*'s national survey of teacher candidates. The project includes five additional reports and a set of web-based analytic tools and guidance documents:

- *Dollars and Sense: Federal Investments in Our Educator Workforce*: a report that offers a plan to shift the field to high-quality, affordable, sustainable teacher preparation.
- Three case studies on what *Prepared To Teach* calls the "3 Rs" of sustainable teacher preparation":
    - Reallocation: *Simple Shifts: Paying Aspiring Teachers with Existing Resources*
    - Reduction: *The Affordability Imperative: Creating Equitable Access to Quality Teacher Preparation*
    - (Re)Investment: *The Residency Revolution: Funding High-Quality Teacher Preparation*
- *Going Further Together: Building Ownership and Engagement for Sustainable, Quality Teacher Preparation:* a case study on ways to build the kind of ownership and engagement that can create sustainable systems of high-quality teacher preparation.
- A suite of web-based, user-friendly resources including university and district budgeting tools, communications tools to share the ideas, and guidance documents to support partnerships as they engage different aspects of sustainability.

All resources are available on the *Prepared To Teach* website. All *Prepared To Teach* materials are licensed under the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-SA; we hope they prove useful to our colleagues everywhere.

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INTRODUCTION

Choosing a teacher preparation program is complicated. The quality of learning opportunities, job prospects, location, duration, ranking and numerous other factors can play a role in aspiring teachers' decision-making processes. Cost, however, is always a crucial consideration for all but the most privileged, requiring complex financial calculations that involve much more than the "sticker price" of a program. Cost considerations are inextricably intertwined with individuals' backgrounds, financial responsibilities, financial aid eligibility, available scholarships, and much more. Evaluating the affordability of a program ultimately depends on personal circumstances.

Though often seen as the major driving factor in college costs, tuition is only part of the picture—and not, as our recent report on candidates' financial anxieties, *#MoreLearningLessDebt: Voices of Aspiring Teachers on Why Money Matters*, discovered, the major issue for those struggling financially.[1] Tuition costs are seldom the same for any two candidates, and scholarships and financial aid result in substantial discounts for the majority of enrollees in college (see *The Affordability Imperative* in this series of reports).[2] Up to 60% of the cost of college is related to living expenses.[3] A teacher candidate's living situation, financial obligations and responsibilities, including dependents, loan payments, health needs, and other factors can have significant financial implications for daily life. For aspiring teachers who want strong preparation that includes extended clinical experiences, many are not financially able to support themselves without working. They have limited alternative options, if any, to pay for their certifications and living expenses. They can take on more debt, work jobs in addition to coursework and clinical requirements, or struggle to make ends meet. These challenges are most pronounced during the culminating semesters of a program when candidates are working in schools full-time, most often unpaid.

Conversations and data about program affordability and financial supports for aspiring teachers often mask the variation in the lived experiences of individuals, especially those from historically underrepresented groups and non-traditional populations. The financial realities of aspiring teachers may vary necessarily at an individual level, but they vary systematically and crucially between particular groups. Education majors from diverse backgrounds are more likely to come from families with less than half of the $90,000 income average for families of education majors who are white.[4] These realities are often buried when considering implications for aspiring teachers, a group that is still predominantly white and female. Teachers of color, who are underrepresented in the workforce, are critical to the goal of closing the achievement gap, as they are most likely to choose to work in the highest need schools, and they significantly boost the academic performance of students of color, while also benefitting all students.[5]

The #MoreLearningLessDebt Aspiring Teachers' Financial Burden Survey on which this report is based is the first effort of its kind to help the field better understand the financial realities of aspiring teachers in the context of their personal circumstances. The earlier report release from this survey, *#MoreLearningLessDebt*, explored aspiring teachers' financial anxieties during their programs. This report begins to piece together the complex picture of the variation in the lived realities faced by aspiring teachers as they engage in unpaid clinical practice, still a norm in the country. The report provides an analytical exploration of key survey responses to the major constructs in the in the survey, presenting the variation and spread of responses to questions such as loan debt, living situations, work, and expenses.

ABOUT THE SURVEY AND THIS REPORT

Launched in the 2019–2020 academic year at 12 institutions across seven states, including public, private, large, small, urban and rural programs, the survey targeted teacher candidates in their last year of their programs, receiving 1,242 responses from across undergraduate and graduate populations.[i]

To build a more a comprehensive understanding of aspiring teachers' financial circumstances, in addition to demographic and background information, the survey included questions regarding financial anxiety; funding sources; living expenses and tuition; living situations; and financial responsibilities.

The data presented in this report do not explore causal relationships between categories; rather, the goal is to better understand the variability in aspiring teachers' financial situations to help the field identify important questions and, where possible, to understand patterns. These snapshot views of this new dataset offer a launching point for further exploration that is much needed in the field to support future educators and create a teaching workforce representative of diverse student backgrounds.[ii]

In addition to reporting on the overall survey sample, this report uses two major groupings for exploratory analyses: Funding levels and racial/ethnic groupings:

FUNDING LEVEL GROUPINGS:

Respondents were classified into three categories—"fully funded," "partially funded," and "not funded"—as indicated by their responses on a survey question requesting disclosure of whether or not they received institutional support for tuition costs. For this question, funding assistance was defined as scholarships, grants and/or other external sources that would not need to be paid back. These funding levels are used in this study to disaggregate data to explore differences in financial realities such as debt and expenses that may exist for aspiring teachers who are responsible, partially responsible or not responsible for tuition costs. The grouping allows for an exploration of financial responsibilities and requirements beyond the cost of tuition.

RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPINGS:

Disaggregating data by race and ethnicity helps explore potential differences for groups that have experienced systemic and institutional barriers in education. For this purpose, the survey used the federal race and ethnicity categories to collect information on respondents.[6] Given both the demographics of the current aspiring teacher population and individuals' own decisions to answer questions or not, demographic data had sample sizes that were too small to allow for analyses of all individual categories. As a result, racial/ethnic classifications have been grouped into four categories: Hispanic/Latinx—White, Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White, Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races, and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races. These groupings allowed for maximum capacity for data analyses to make space for and elevate the experiences of candidates from underrepresented backgrounds in the teaching workforce. Candidates of any race who

[i] For the complete survey methodology and additional information related to this study, see Mansukhani and Santos, *#MoreLearningLessDebt.*

[ii] For the purpose of this report, survey respondents are referred to as "respondents", "aspiring teachers" and "candidates" interchangeably. When used, the term "students" refers to K-12 students.

selected Hispanic/Latinx were classified as so, and further categorized as White if they selected that category as a sole additional race category. Otherwise, Hispanic/Latinx respondents were further categorized as All Other Races.[iii]

Within the sample, respondents were overwhelmingly White and female, with 86% of the participants in the survey identifying as female, and 69% indicating White as their only racial/ethnic category. More than a quarter, 28%, responded that they did not receive any funding from external sources, scholarships, or grants to help them pay for their tuition. Table 1 provides a summary of key characteristics among the survey participants.

Table 1: Summary of Demographic and Categorical Information

Gender	Female	86%
	Male	13%
	Other/prefer not to answer	1%
First Generation	First-generation college student	36%
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	5%
	Black or African American	2%
	White	69%
	Other/Unknown/Prefer not to answer	7%
	Hispanic/Latinx	18%
Tuition support status	Fully Funded	24%
	Partially Funded	48%
	Not Funded	28%

Highlights from the Data Explorations in This Report

Below are the highlights for each of the survey areas that this report explores: choosing a program, loan burdens and forgiveness awareness, living situations, income and work, living expenses, and sources of financial support. Graphic representations of the data, along with discussion of the survey area, comprise the remainder of the report.

Choosing a Program

- A majority of respondents across all funding levels indicated that financial considerations factored into their decision-making processes for choosing a program.
- Those who expressed difficulty in being able to afford an unexpected expense of less than $100 were more inclined to consider finances when choosing a program.
- Candidates who identified as Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races and Hispanic/Latinx—White reported that financial considerations factored into choosing a program to greater degrees than candidates who identified as Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races.

Loan Burdens and Loan Forgiveness Awareness

- Candidates who indicated "Not funded" had a greater median loan amount for loans borrowed for their current academic year.
- "Fully funded" candidates also, though, take out loans, with a median of about $12,000, potentially indicating that debt is being accrued to cover expenses outside of tuition costs.

[iii] The authors have chosen to adopt the gender-neutral term "Latinx" in this report and to capitalize all racial/ethnic terms when used as categorical descriptors. See Appendix 2 for survey questions.

- Candidates who identified as Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races had a higher median loan amount by roughly $5,000 and $10,000, respectively, compared to Hispanic/Latinx—White candidates and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White candidates.
- About half of all respondent groups indicated being aware of loan forgiveness programs.

Living Situations

- When asked about their living situations, most candidates responded that they live with roommates, spouses/partners, or parent/guardians.
- About 30% of respondents indicated they directly support 1 or more persons financially.

Work and Earnings

- Most candidates, across all funding levels, work and have a median take home income of about $1,000.
- Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races candidates have the same median take-home income as Non-Hispanic/Latinx-White candidates, but have a wider distribution with a higher fence perhaps indicating an increased need to work to cover living expenses.
- Among the survey respondents who indicated having to work, half work 20+ hours while concurrently enrolled in their programs.

Living Expenses

- The majority of respondents across funding levels had monthly expenses under $2,000.
- Higher monthly take-home income was correlated with higher monthly expenses, but living expense data was also related to which institution respondents attended, indicating a possible geographical cost-of-living artifact in the data.

Financial Support

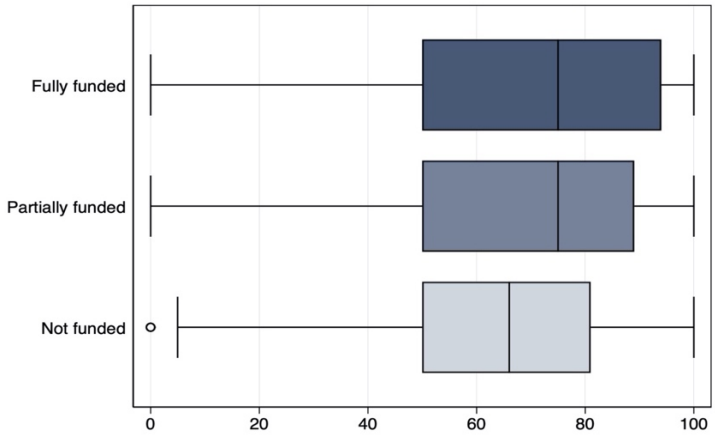
- The highest sources of financial support for candidates were financial assistance from loans and from family or friends.
- These early exploration of the data shows that candidates receive financial assistance for tuition costs mostly from loans and financial assistance for monthly expenses mostly from family or friends.

CANDIDATES' FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A PROGRAM

To explore the degree to which candidates' financial situations may have influenced their choice of program, this study explored responses to the question, "To what extent did financial considerations come into play when you were exploring teacher preparation pathways?" The question allowed candidates to rate the degree to which financial considerations influenced their decisions using a 0 to 100 scale, with 0=Not at all, and 100=To a very great extent. Responses to this question were explored by three categories: Funding level, race/ethnicity, and ability to handle unexpected expenses.

Figure 1 shows that financial consideration greatly influences the decision in choosing a teacher preparation pathway. The median value is approximately the same for both fully funded and partially funded candidates, while candidates who indicated not being funded have a lower median. All categories have 75% of their responses at a value of 50 or higher, indicating that the majority of candidates expressed that financial considerations factored into their decision-making process to a large extent when they were exploring teacher preparation pathways.

Figure 1: Financial Considerations and Program Selection, by Funding Level



Note: All 1,242 respondents gave a response in regard to their funding level. Information on the interpretation of a box plot can be found in Appendix 3.

Figure 2 shows results for the same question by race/ethnicity. The graph shows the same median for both Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races and Hispanic/Latinx—White compared to slightly lower medians for Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races. Across all racial/ethnic groups, the 25th percentile of the box chart shows that 75% of the observations stretch from 50 and higher, again indicating the pervasiveness of financial considerations influencing program selection.

Figure 2: Financial Considerations and Program Selection, by Race/Ethnicity

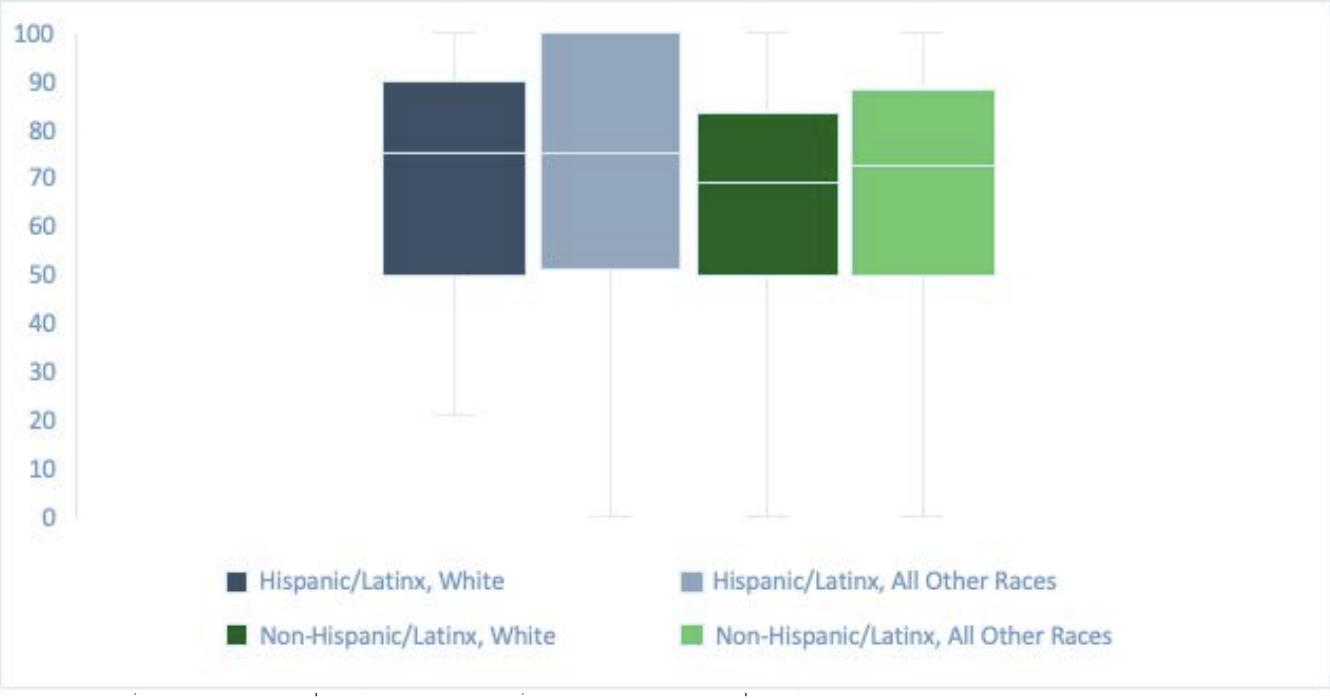
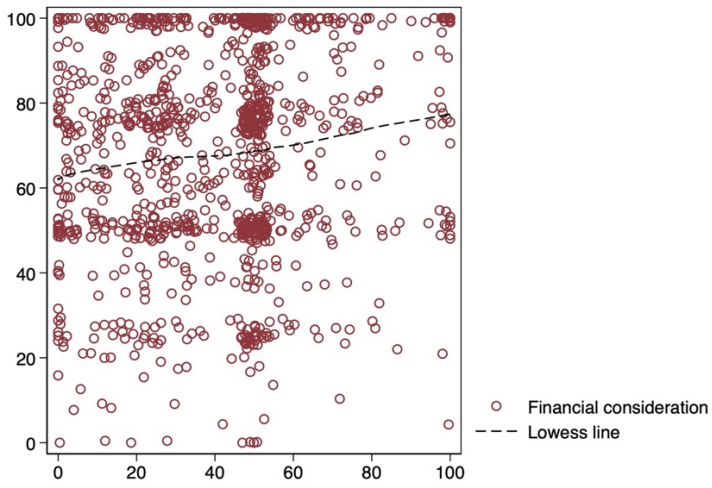


Figure 3 shows a scatterplot of the survey question on financial considerations and another question in the survey intended to capture the precariousness of candidates' financial situations: "How difficult would it be to deal with an unexpected expense of a certain dollar amount? The question offered multiple categories of unexpected expenses, such as $0-$100, $250-$500, and over $2,000 (see *#MoreLearningLessDebt*, p. 8). Figure 3 uses the $0-$100 response category. A sliding scale from 0 to 100, where 0=Not at all difficult and 100=Extremely difficult, allowed respondents to offer gradations of financial challenge.

Figure 3: Financial Considerations and Capacity to Handle Unexpected Expenses



Note: The vertical Y-axis shows the financial consideration scale, while the horizontal X-axis shows difficulty paying an unexpected expense of $0 - $100, charting 1,057 responses. For readability, 5% of random noise (jitter) were added to the graph making overlapping observations more visible. The Lowess line shows a weighted smoothing, by running a regression of the Y-axis variable on the X-axis variable.

A respondent with a higher difficulty of dealing with an unexpected expense as low as $0 - $100 was assumed to be experiencing more financial difficulties compared to candidates with less difficulty of paying such expenses. A pairwise correlation on the two variables showed in Figure 3 demonstrated a significant positive correlation ($p \leq 0.05$) between financial considerations and difficulty dealing with an unexpected expense of $0 - $100.

DISCUSSION OF FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PROGRAM SELECTION

Higher education is a major investment for most individuals in the United States, and the low salaries that teachers receive in this country relative to other college graduates means that the financial return on that investment is comparatively diminished.[7]

Each of the three categorical analyses of data on the degree to which candidates based program selection on financial considerations indicates that affordability matters for groups that either currently face financial burdens or who are part of groups that have been historically excluded from the kinds of inter-generational wealth and relative pay benefits that white families have.[8]

By being more cognizant of differences in candidates' ability to afford preparation costs, programs can work to develop approaches for tuition supports that ensure applicants with higher needs have access to funding. Programs should also work to maximize candidates' access to financial supports through a range of viable cost-reducing approaches, as outlined in *The Affordability Imperative*. In addition, they can develop and publicize the financial supports that they have as part of their outreach, including resources like emergency funds and food supports, so that candidates know their basic needs will be met if they select a program.

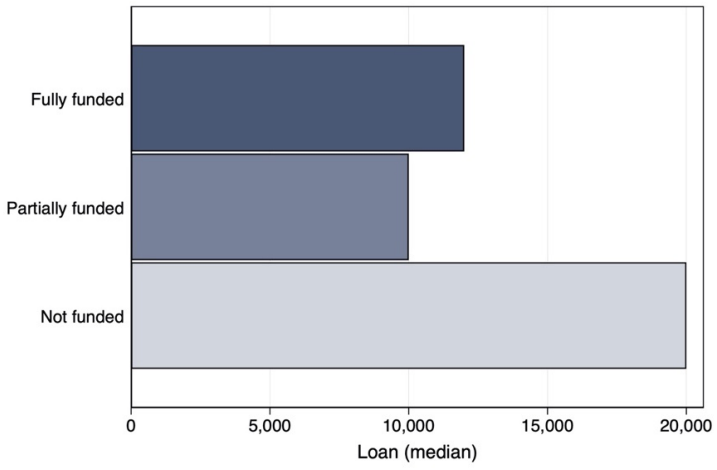
CANDIDATES' ONE-YEAR LOAN BURDEN AND LOAN FORGIVENESS AWARENESS

Because survey respondents were in their final year of their programs, the need to engage in what most often is unpaid clinical practice was expected. To understand how loans might intersect with the timeframe during which unpaid clinical practice happens, the survey asked the question "W*hich of the following financial supports help pay your tuition and living costs* ***this year****?"* Respondents could indicate all financial support sources that were applicable to them from the following categories: federal work-study; earnings from university employment opportunities; earnings from employments outside the university; loans from any source; financial assistance from a partner, parents or guardians, friends or family; personal savings; credit cards; and other. Slightly more than 700 candidates indicated they had taken out loans. The only category with more responses was the very broad, financial assistance from a partner, parents or guardians, friends, or family; 768 candidates responded that they received financial support from these sources.

Loan data were explored through two lenses: median loan amounts by funding level and ethnicity, and awareness of loan forgiveness programs by funding level and ethnicity.[iv]

Figure 4 presents median loan amounts by funding level across loan categories that respondents indicated they had received funding through: personal federal loans, personal private loans, personal state loans, and loans others took out to support them. The aggregate values for the median loan amounts for candidates who were not fully funded was $20,000 for the 2019-2020 school year. Figure 4 also shows that candidates who were fully funded also needed to take out loans of about $12,000, slightly higher than the $10,000 median value of partially funded candidates.

Figure 4: Median Loan Amount, by Funding Level

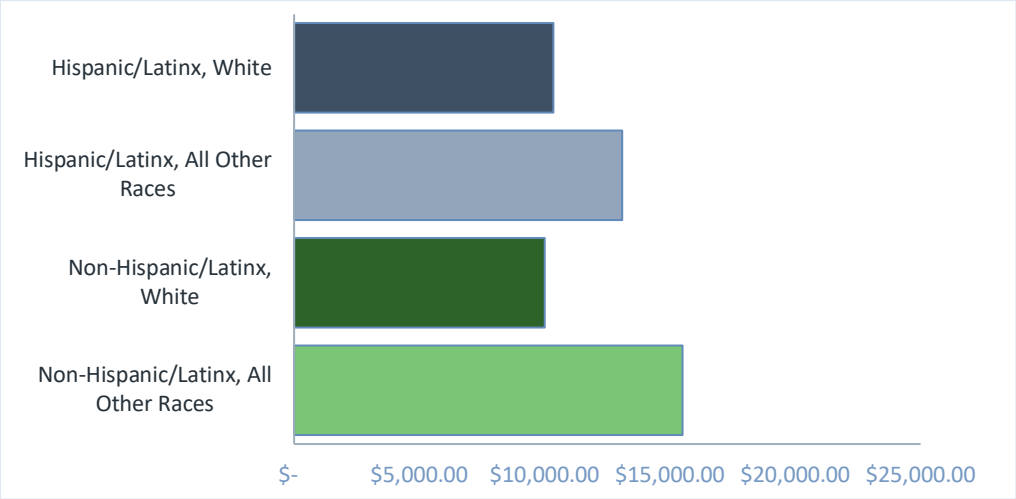


Note: Median of total loan are based on 632 candidates where 119 are fully funded, 305 partially funded, and 208 candidates not funded.

[iv] The survey asked respondents about their awareness of loan forgiveness programs given the *Prepared To Teach* project's experience in the field, which indicates that many people assume teacher candidates don't need to worry much about loans because of loan forgiveness programs for taking teaching positions in high-needs schools after graduation.

Figure 5 uses the same median dollar value as Figure 4, analyzed by racial/ethnic groups. Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races candidates had median loans from $5,000 to $10,000 higher than Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White candidates.

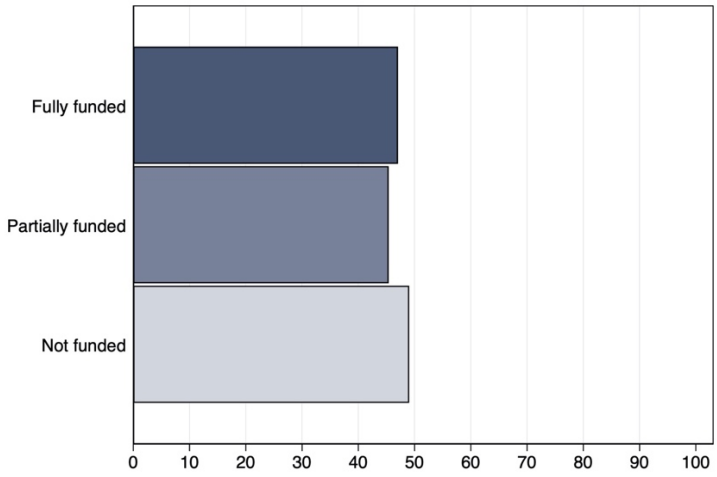
Figure 5: Median Loan Amount, by Ethnicity



Note: The median value of loan totals are based on 519 total candidates, of whom 35 are Hispanic/Latinx—White, 70 are Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races, 344 are Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White, and 70 are Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races.

Among the 632 respondents who reported their estimated loan amounts, fewer than 50% of them across all funding levels indicated they were aware of any loan forgiveness programs that might apply to them, as indicated in Figure 6.

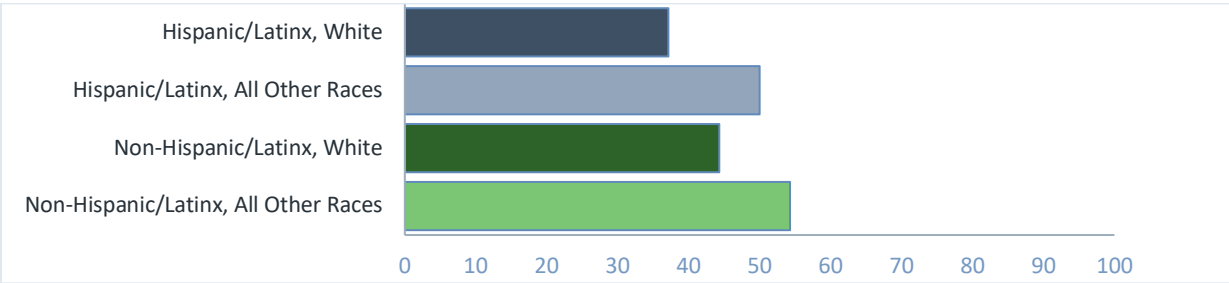
Figure 6: Awareness of Loan Forgiveness Program, by Funding Level



Note: Percentages are based on 631 candidates who reported the dollar amount they borrowed to fund their educational costs for 2019-2020 school year.

In Figure 7, percentages showed some variation. Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White respondents reported that they were aware of such programs at the rate of 44%, where Hispanic/Latinx—White respondents reported they were aware of such programs only at the rate of 37%.

Figure 7: Awareness of Loan Forgiveness Program, by Ethnicity



Note: Percentages are based on 518 candidates of whom 35 are Hispanic/Latinx—White, 70 are Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races, 343 are Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White, and 70 are Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races.

DISCUSSION OF CANDIDATES' LOAN BURDENS AND LOAN FORGIVENESS AWARENESS

Student debt, largely accepted in the United States as a necessity to earn a college degree, has reached crisis levels. As of 2020, Americans owe more than $1.6 trillion in student debt.[9] For educators, who are likely to have the same debt burden as peers from their graduating classes but, compared to other fields, expect far lower salaries, that debt burden can be crushing.[10] Even for those who can and do keep up with their increasingly onerous repayments, student debt means the delay of countless other dreams with incalculable costs both in terms of personal happiness and long-term prosperity.

Survey responses reinforce this unfortunate reality. The situation is dire for aspiring teachers, even for those who receive partial or full funding toward tuition costs. With median loan amounts of over $10,000 and $20,000 toward their current academic year (2019-2020) for fully funded and unfunded candidates respectively, the data indicate that even when tuition burdens are eased, candidates may be forced to take out loans to pay for living expenses. Comparing loan burdens across racial/ethnic groups show that candidates of color had higher debt burdens, creating additional financial barriers for already underrepresented groups in the educator workforce.

Among the 632 candidates that reported an estimated loan amount, less than 50% said they were aware of any loan forgiveness program that might apply to them. Combining high debt burdens with low financial literacy and awareness of loan forgiveness programs results in financial disincentives detrimental to the educator workforce.

As teacher preparation continues to work towards a system where every individual who wants to be a teacher can afford to attend a quality preparation program, further exploration and understanding of the financial realities and candidates' needs must be centered. Low levels of awareness around loan forgiveness demonstrates a crucial untapped opportunity for preparation programs to increase financial literacy for current and prospective candidates. Financial literacy is an equitable resource and an important lever to support a more diverse teacher candidate population, as they may experience heightened financial burdens prior to, and during program enrollment.

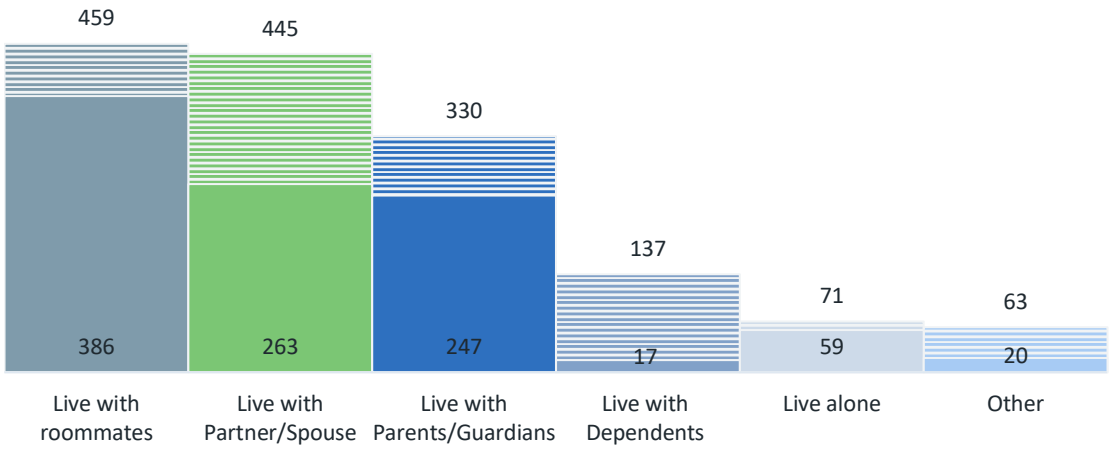
CANDIDATES' LIVING SITUATIONS

The survey asked about with whom respondents lived and about how many individuals candidates directly supported financially.

When asked about their living situations, respondents were able to select multiple categories, including living alone, with a spouse/partner, with parents, with dependents, and other. Of the 1,240 respondents answering this question, 20% reported having more than one living situation over the course of the past year, for example, living with roommates for part of a year and at home with parents for another part of the year.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of living situation responses. Each vertical bar represents a single category (e.g., "Live with roommates). The solid portion of the bar indicates the number of candidates who only experienced that living situation; striped portions indicate those who experienced that living situation in addition to another. Numbers on top represent the total "N" for that bar. For example, looking at the category "Live with roommates" the bar shows a total of 459 candidates responded that this was at least one of their living situations; for 386 of these, respondents living with roommates was their only living situation during the year.

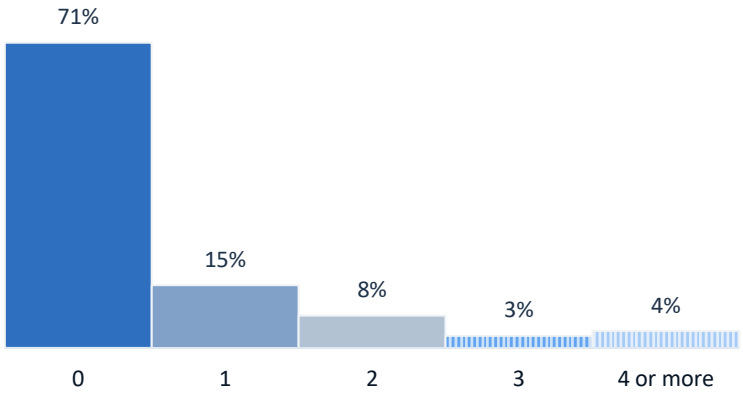
Figure 8: Living Situation



Note: Among the 1,240 candidates answering this question, 992 gave only one type of living situation, 248 candidates gave two to four living situations.

As Figure 9 shows, respondents largely did not report financial responsibility for others on this survey; 71% of the respondents reported that no other individuals received financial support directly from them. Still, 29% responded that they financially supported one or more individuals directly.

Figure 9: Number of Individuals Candidates Directly Support Financially



Note: Percentage are based 1,231 candidates. Categories indicating 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 or more were combined into 4 or more because of the low numbers of responses in these high-value categories.

DISCUSSION OF CANDIDATES' LIVING SITUATIONS

Living situations can vary for each individual candidate, and as noted in some of the data, many candidates had more than one living situation during the time they completed the survey. Living situations are linked to expenses, the cost of living in the geographical area, and how much of a monthly income a candidate might earn. Since preparation programs may require significant time from candidates' schedules, they may need to either live close to campus, which can be more expensive, and/or move in with others to defray the costs of living. Preparation programs can support candidates by understanding how the variety of living situations and corresponding travel time might intersect with demands of the program, including clinical experience. This understanding can then allow preparation programs to think critically about program structures such as course schedules and locations, creating more candidate-friendly placements that can help reduce time and travel anxieties, while also potentially allowing candidates to find housing that is less expensive if they do not need to be close to campus.

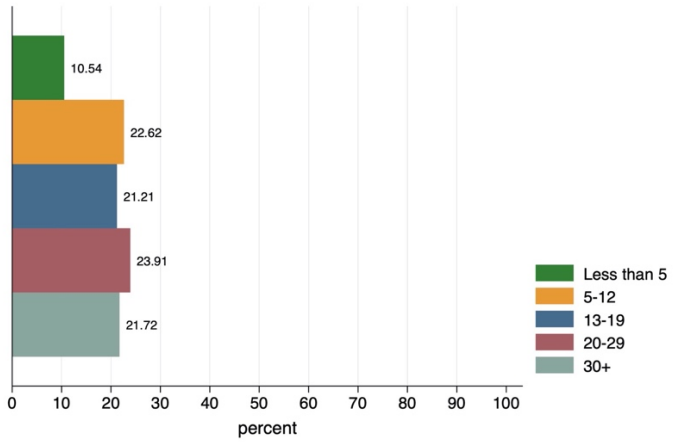
Almost 30% of candidates indicated they financially supported one person or more, whether they lived in the same household or not. This calls for preparation programs to consider the financial needs for candidates with children, elderly and disabled relatives, immigrant families reliant on financial support from a relative, amongst other conditions that may represent a third of candidates who responded to this question. This is especially important when considering candidates from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, as documented in *#MoreLearningLessDebt*, who have cultural obligations to provide for their families along with other factors.

CANDIDATES' WORK AND EARNINGS

To better understand candidates' work lives, the survey asked about both the number of hours candidates worked and the income that their jobs generated. Income data are presented by funding level, race/ethnicity, and number of hours worked.

Roughly 60% of respondents reported holding jobs, indicating the number of hours they worked per week based on categorical responses of less than five hours, 5-12 hours, 13-19 hours, 20-29 hours, and 30 or more hours.[11] Figure 10 shows that, among respondents who worked, about 90% worked five or more hours a week and about 46%, almost half of respondents, worked 20 or more hours per week.

Figure 10: Percentage of Working Respondents, by Number of Hours' Work Per Week



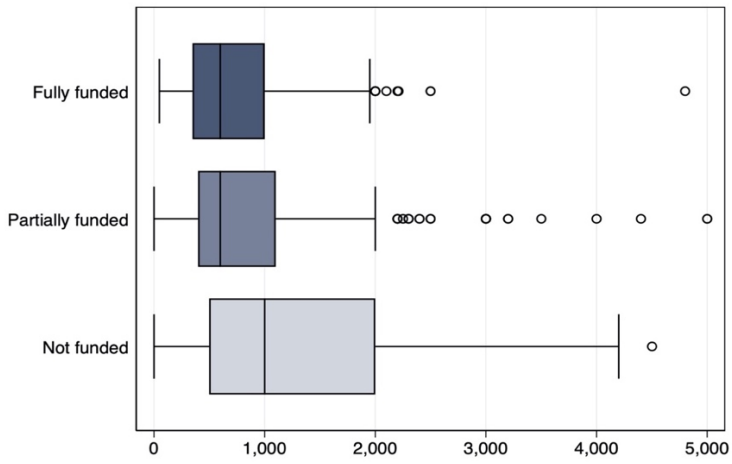
Note: Figure 10 shows the distribution of 778 candidates reporting on their weekly working hours.

The question on earnings, which asked, "Approximately how much do you earn monthly as take-home pay from your employment?" allowed respondents to fill in values themselves rather than choose from categorical responses. The 757 responses to this question ranged from $0 to $26,000; trimming the data using a cutoff line of $5,000 dollars reduced the total responses to 754.

Figures 11 presents approximate monthly take-home income by funding level. The median line in the box plot indicates a slightly higher monthly income for respondents in the not funded category. It also shows fully funded and partially funded candidates having less variation compared to unfunded respondents. Roughly 75% of fully funded and partially funded respondents reported earnings lower than $1,200, while only about half of unfunded respondents had earnings lower than $1,200.

The overall median take-home income for all 754 candidates is $700, which indicates that the median line for not funded candidates is $300 higher than the overall median. Fully and partially funded candidates have a median of $600, $100 dollars lower than the overall median.

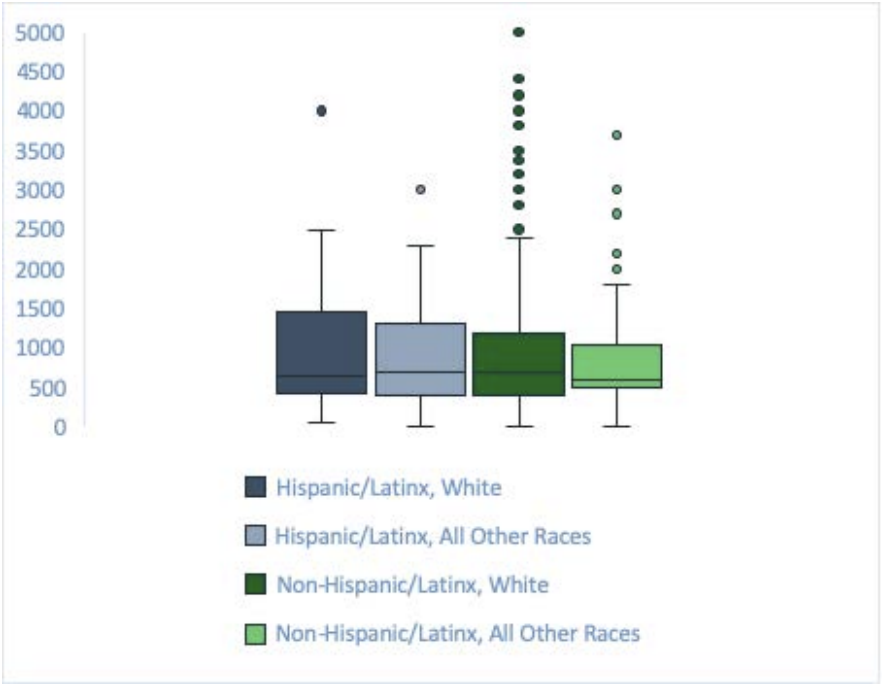
Figure 11: Monthly Take-Home Income, by Funding Level



Note: Figure 11 has a cutoff assumption of $5,000 dollars, with a resulting 754 respondents informing the data presentation.

Figure 12 presents earnings information by race/ethnicity. Differences in median monthly income for all Hispanic/Latinx candidates compared to all Non-Hispanic/Latinx candidates is minimal. Hispanic/Latinx—White candidates have a median take home income of $650, the Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races value is $700, Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White candidates take home $700, and Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races have the lowest median value, $610 a month.

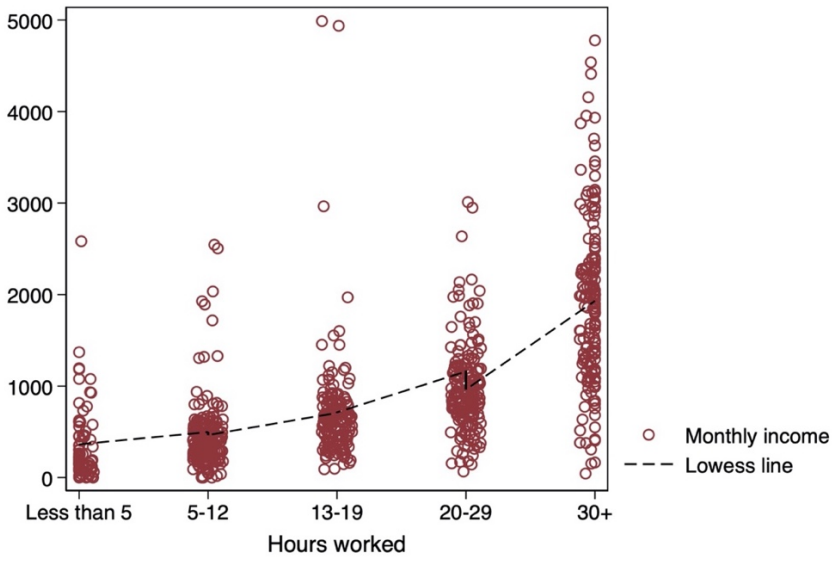
Figure 12: Monthly Take-Home Income, by Race/Ethnicity



Note: Responses indicating a higher income than $5,000 were not included in the calculations. This figure represents 642 candidates who responded to having a take-home income within the assumed range and who indicated an ethnicity category of whom 37 are Hispanic/Latinx—White, 71 are Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races, 453 are Non-Hispanic/Latinx—White, and 81 are Non-Hispanic/Latinx—All Other Races.

Figure 13 presents a scatterplot of earnings by the number of hours worked per week. Data demonstrate a positive correlation between working hours and monthly income, an unsurprising finding since working more would be presumed to result in more income. The level of income earned in the top category on average seems to indicate higher hourly wages for those working full-time jobs. This data point could be a function of the categories themselves, for example, that most people in the 20-29 hours of work category clock in at closer to 20 hours, and most people in the 30-plus hours category work closer to 40 hours a week. Alternatively, the data might also indicate that some candidates who enter programs already had stable full-time jobs with solid salaries and did not give them up in order to pursue teacher certification.

Figure 13: Monthly Earnings by Weekly Working Hours



Note: Scatterplot shows responses from 753 candidates. For readability 5% of random noise (jitter) were added to the graph making overlapping observations more visible. Lowess line provided in the scatterplot shows a weighted smoothing, by running a regression on monthly income and hours worked.

DISCUSSION OF CANDIDATES' WORK AND EARNINGS

In this survey sample, nearly 40% of candidates work 20 or more hours a week. Given that the survey targeted respondents at the end of their programs, expectations for clinical practice would require significant commitments of time, on top of culminating classes for their courses of study. To the extent that candidates are overcommitted, their capacity to focus on learning—and to care for themselves, as the *#MoreLearningLessDebt* report documented—is compromised.

By engaging with school and district partners to integrate compensation into clinical practice, as outlined in the companion report *Simple Shifts: Paying Aspiring Teachers with Existing Resources*, preparation programs can offer candidates an income source that could easily approach the median level of earnings documented in this study.[12] Tutoring, substitute teaching, extracurricular activities—all these kinds of instructional roles can productively be engaged as part of the program's clinical placement curriculum, simultaneously reducing both time and income burdens for candidates.

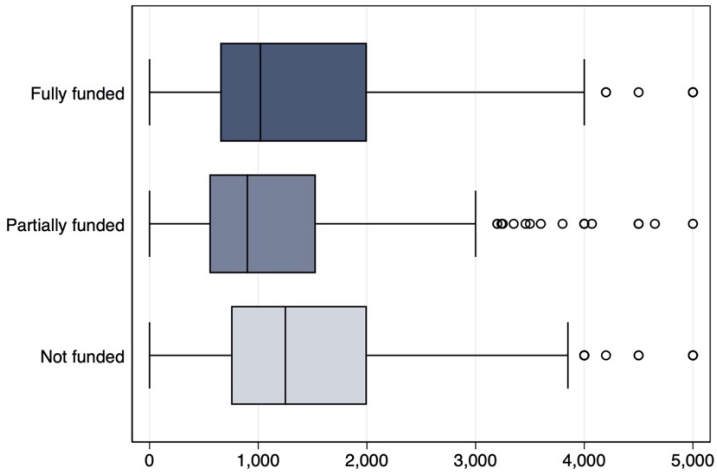
CANDIDATES' LIVING EXPENSES

Because up to 60% of the cost of college can come from living expenses, the survey sought to understand how much candidates needed to budget for monthly expenses.[13] As with the earnings question, respondents were allowed to fill in specific values for their expenses rather than choose from categorical responses. Survey takers were asked to exclude tuition, loan repayments, and exceptional costs such as vacations from their response estimates.

Out of 1,242 candidate responses in the survey, 1,212 responded to the item regarding their monthly expenses, with values ranging from a minimum of $0 to a maximum of $61,500. This study trimmed the outlier values from the high end of the range using a $5,000 cutoff line. These data are presented by two categories: Funding level for tuition and individuals' monthly earnings, as explored in the previous report section.

Figure 14 shows the distribution of monthly expenses by funding level. Unfunded respondents had a higher median monthly expense value compared to the two other funding categories. All three categories show that 75% of their respondents had monthly expenses of $2,000 or less. Respondents who indicated being fully funded had higher median expenses than those who were partially funded. Partially funded candidates also reported a much lower level of monthly expenses in general.

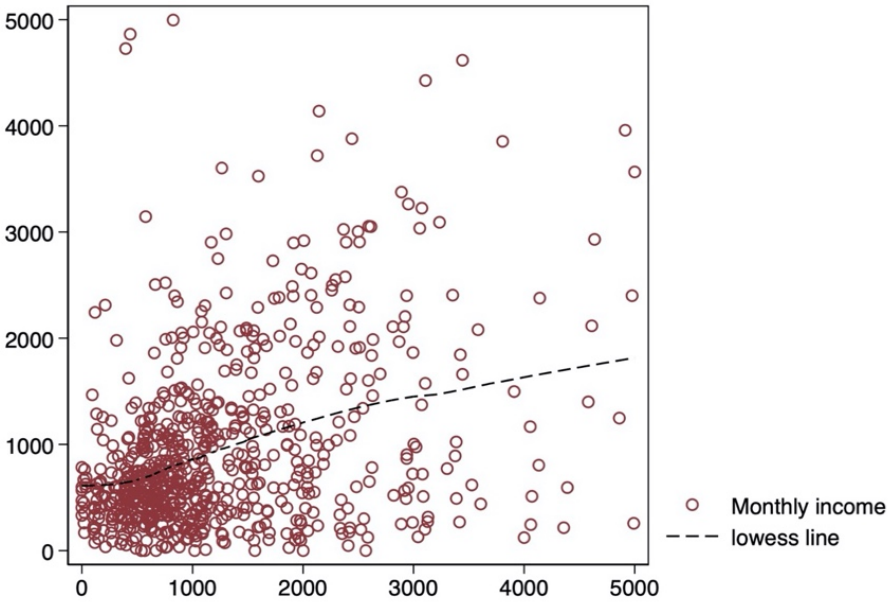
Figure 14: Monthly Expenses, by Funding Level



Note: Responses indicating a higher income than $5,000 were not included in the calculations. This figure represents 1,182 candidates who responded to having estimated monthly expenses within the assumed range.

Figure 15 explores the relationship between monthly income and expenses, documenting a positive relationship between monthly income and monthly expenses. While the data suggest that a respondent with higher earnings is more likely to have higher monthly expenses, these data once again may be influenced by the geographic cost of living where the candidate resides. A pairwise correlation confirmed that the relationship between monthly income and monthly expenses was significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level. The scatterplot also demonstrates that the majority of candidates clustered just below $2,000 for monthly expenses and at about $1,200 for monthly income.

Figure 15: Income vs. Expenses



Note: Both monthly income and monthly expenses used a cutoff line of $5,000 to trim outlier data. The vertical Y-axis shows monthly income while horizontal X-axis shows monthly expenses. For readability, 5% of random noise (jitter) were added to the graph to make overlapping observations more visible. The Lowess line provided in the scatterplot shows a weighted smoothing, by running a regression of the Y-axis variable on the X-axis variable.

DISCUSSION OF CANDIDATES' LIVING EXPENSES

In general, it appears that earnings from work are not sufficient to cover candidates' monthly expenses. The fact that there is an $800 gap per month on average between earnings and living expenses would help explain why so many candidates expressed that their financial burdens create anxieties for them, as documented in the *#MoreLearningLessDebt* report.

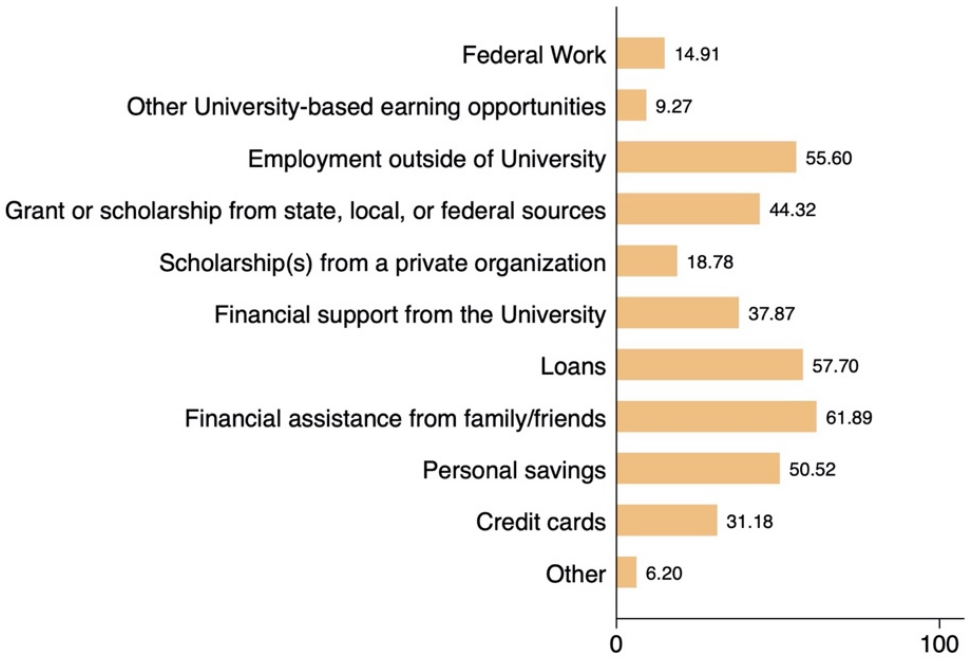
If aspiring teachers must cover these unmet living expenses through loans or credit card debt—and a troubling 31% of respondents do use credit cards to pay for their expenses during preparation—their low salaries once they are hired as teachers will make paying that debt off much more difficult than for college graduates in other fields.[14] Preventing debt in the first instance by ensuring that candidates have enough to live on during clinical practice should be a priority for programs and their school and district partners.

SOURCES OF CANDIDATES' FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The last section of this report explores the various sources of candidates' financial supports during their programs. Through pilot survey tests, *Prepared To Teach* identified a range of financial support sources that candidates found important while pursuing their degrees; over time, the list of sources consolidated into ten distinct categories, with an "other addition, as depicted in Figure 16. Financial assistance from family/friends was the most frequently identified source of financial support, with 62% of respondents indicating them as resources. Loans followed closely, with 58% of respondents indicating they had taken out loans. Outside employment was a source for 56% of candidates.

Figure 16: Sources of Financial Support for Tuition and Living Costs

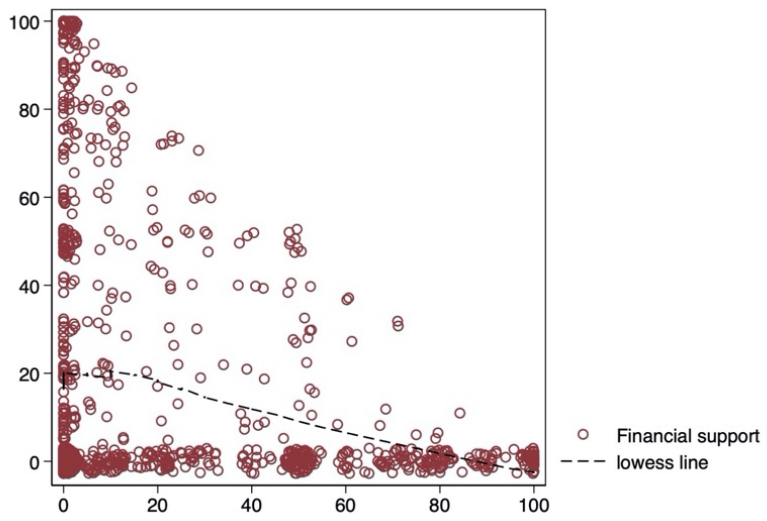
Which financial support help pay your tuition and living costs this year?



Note: Figure 16 is based on 1,241 candidates. Percentage indicates how many candidates relied on the different kinds of financial supports to pay for their tuition and living costs. 90 candidates indicated financial support from only one source and 1,151 candidates indicated that they receive financial support from multiple funding sources.

Figures 17 and 18 explore how these financial resources relate to candidates' living expenses and their tuition. Figure 17 depicts the relationship between the amount of financial support received to pay for monthly living costs from family/friends and loans while Figure 18 shows the same relationship but for financial support towards tuition cost.

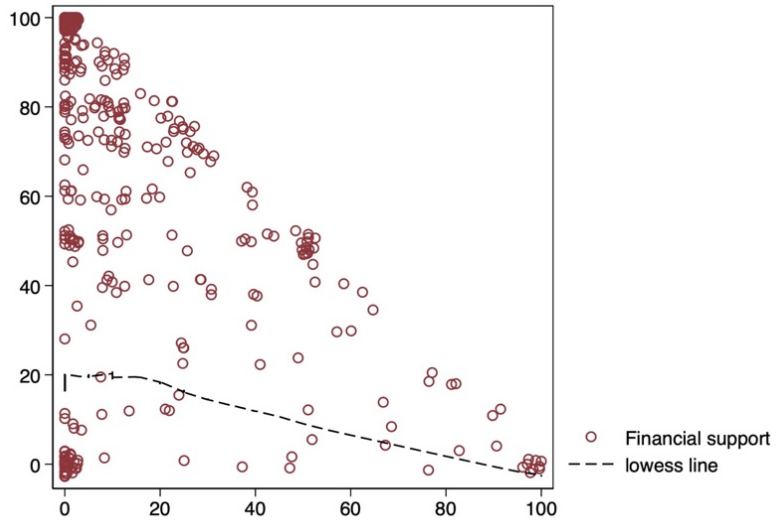
Figure 17: Sources of Support for Living Expenses, Family/Friends vs. Loans



Note: The vertical Y-axis shows financial support received from Loans while the horizontal X-axis show financial support received from Family/friends. For readability 5% of random noise (jitter) were added to the graph making overlapping observations more visible. Lowess line provided in the scatterplot shows a weighted smoothing, by running a regression of the Y-axis variable on the X-axis variable.

Both Figure 17 and 18 show a negative correlation between financial support from loans and financial support from family/friends. In both cases the correlation is significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level. Based on the scatterplots it also appears that more candidates are receiving financial support from family/friends for monthly living expenses compared to tuition costs.

Figure 18: Sources of Support for Tuition, Family/Friends vs. Loans



Note: The vertical Y-axis shows financial support received from Loans while the horizontal X-axis show financial support received from Family/friends. For readability 5% of random noise (jitter) were added to the graph making overlapping observations more visible. Lowess line provided in the scatterplot shows a weighted smoothing, by running a regression on y-axis variable on x-axis variable.

DISCUSSION OF SOURCES OF CANDIDATES' FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

The data show that respondents' main sources of financial supports are financial assistance from family/friends, loans, and employment from outside the university. Candidates are either taking on debt (amounts by degree level are analyzed in *#MoreLearningLessDebt*), have family members who can provide for them financially, or have to work to support themselves. More likely than not, it is a combination of all three. Historical economic inequities would predict that candidates from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and low-income communities would be more likely to need to take on debt and work to support themselves through their teacher preparation program. The data also suggest that candidates rely more on loans for tuition costs and on family/friends for living expenses. For those candidates who have to take out loans to support themselves and to cover tuition, the debt burden can be exacerbated over time due to low salaries in teaching that make repayment difficult, placing these candidates in precarious financial positions.

This data suggests that sources of funding can be a barrier for candidates from diverse backgrounds and give access to more privileged candidates who have financial support from others. Preparation programs can consider how they present funding options to candidates, offering grants and scholarships that don't need to be paid back or stipends during clinical practice in order to make costs more manageable, reduce financial anxiety, and allow candidates more time to devote to their program curriculum.

CONCLUSION

In order to attract an educator workforce that represents today's students, teacher preparation will need to shift dramatically towards a system that reduces financial barriers to entry. Reducing costs of tuition can help ease burdens, especially, it appears, for loan debt. But tuition reductions alone will not be sufficient. Living expenses, especially during clinical practice, create financial burdens and need to be better understood as part of the broader conversation of barriers to entry into teaching.

Financial literacy and awareness should more integral to recruitment and advisement of all teacher candidates—not just for those who happen to take advantage of colleges' financial aid office services. Programs can, as outlined in *The Affordability Imperative*, find ways to support candidates' understandings of options for paying for their degrees—options that prevent accumulation of debt and, when debt is necessary, maximize access to loan forgiveness opportunities.

We all have a role to play in helping change the financial realities that teacher candidates face and in removing barriers to entry into the field. Among those roles is better understanding the realities that exist. This survey and the reports that it is enabling is the first effort of its kind to understand these realities; we believe the field needs more. Only when we understand the complexities and variations of financial burdens across groups can we begin to address the barriers effectively.

Three reports in this series detail how programs and their school and district partners can help alleviate these challenges by finding ways to bring more financial support to candidates—we call the approaches the "3 Rs" of Reducing costs, Reallocating roles, and (Re)Investing in residency preparation programs.

- Universities can reduce costs by maximizing candidates' access to existing financial aid dollars, strengthening partnerships in ways that allow fieldwork to be more integrated into coursework and thus reducing time to degrees, and building new funding streams for candidates, for example, from workforce development dollars (see *The Affordability Imperative*).
- Partnerships between P-12 and preparation programs can design program-embedded instructional experiences for candidates that allow schools and districts to create meaningful paid roles for candidates that provide income, support student learning, and meet programs' learning goals for candidates (see *Simple Shifts*).
- Districts can reimagine their use of human capital and instructional dollars to build systems where residencies are fully embedded into their strategic plans, providing funding for candidates as part of their school-based instructional improvement models (see *The Residency Revolution*).

Finally, the nation itself should seriously explore investing in high-quality residency preparation as the norm across all states and localities, creating a system of education across the country that both meets local needs and strengthens outcomes for everyone (see *Dollars and Sense*).

We invite readers to explore these resources to become part of a network of programs, districts, schools, advocacy groups, and researchers who are helping change how candidates experience their entry into the field of teaching by alleviating their financial burdens.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA AND REPORT ASSUMPTIONS

All data presented in this report are self-reported data. The assumption for the purpose of the study was that the self-reported data represented true values. Open field data that allowed candidates to enter in values (such as income earned through work) were standardized into rounded dollar formats; questionable field entries were removed from the sample. Statistical corrections were made where needed to adjust for extreme outliers to help better represent the majority of survey responses.

The data analysis and resulting representations in this report were conducted using Stata, a statistical software programing tool that offers methods to provide descriptive graphs and plots with add-on options for looking at data between and among different groups. For readability, some graphs are represented from Excel where the readability and essence of the graph were not easily built in Stata. A description of how to interpret box plots can be found in Appendix 3.

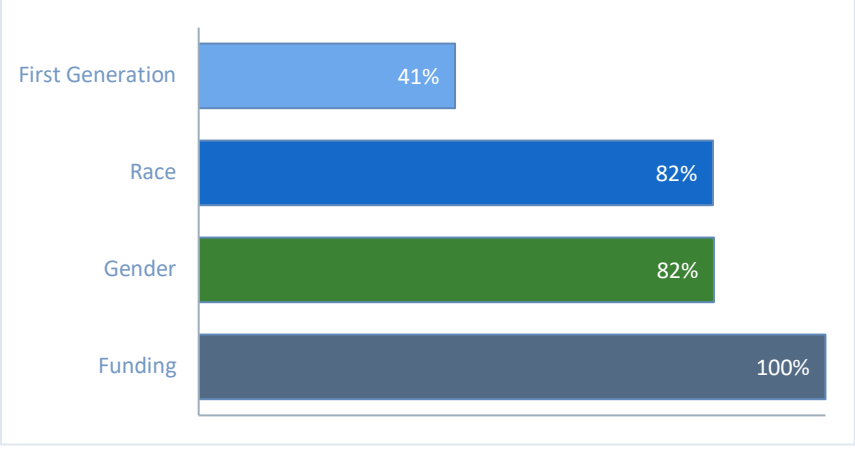
Response rates across the full survey varied from question to question for several reasons. Not all participating institutions received all questions, as the project is still in exploratory phases and pursued incremental improvements over the course of the survey administration. Skip patterns within questions also, by design, ensured respondents for whom responses did not apply would not see some questions, such as the panel of questions about employment, which were not presented to respondents who indicated they did not work. Some respondents did not answer some questions, perhaps because they accidently skipped questions or were not comfortable sharing their answers. The report includes response rates that do not represent the whole sample where appropriate to better communicate percentages and numbers given in the report.

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONS USED FOR CATEGORY GROUPINGS, WITH RESPONSE RATES

Survey questions about respondent characteristics:

- Are you a first-generation college student?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Other (please note)
- How do you identify? Please select all that apply
  - American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - Hispanic or Latinx
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - White
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - Other (please note)
  - Prefer not to respond
- How do you identify?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other (please specify)
  - Prefer not to answer
- This academic year, how much of your tuition will be funded through scholarships, grants, and/or other external sources (excluding yourself, family and friends) that do not need to be paid back?
  - Fully funded through such sources
  - Partially funded through such sources
  - Not funded at all through such sources

Appendix Figure 1: Response Rates Across Respondent Categories

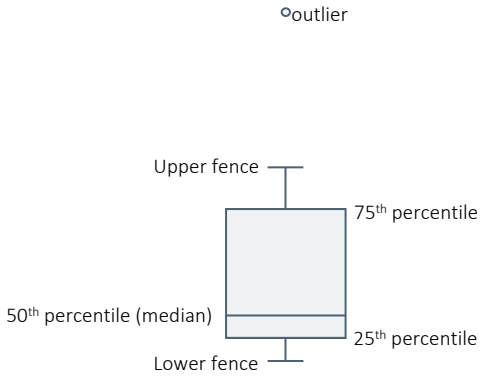


Note: Based on 1,242 survey responses Figure A1 show the percentage of participants that gave a response to the specific question in regard to the category.

APPENDIX 3: BOX PLOT INTERPRETATION

Box plots are known for showing a five-point summary of the full data or subgroups/categories of the data.[15]

Appendix Figure 2: Box Plot Explanation



50th percentile (Median): Middle point of the full data. This value indicates at what value the data centers.

25th percentile: Middle point of the lower half of the data (X_{25}).

75th percentile: Middle point of the upper half of the data (X_{75}).

Lower fence: The minimum value in the data set, or in the event of outliers the lowest point fenced off based on this formula:

$$X_{[25]} - \frac{3}{2}(X_{[75]} - X_{[25]}$$

Upper fence: The maximum value in the data set, or in the event of outliers the highest point fenced off based on this formula:

$$X_{[75]} + \frac{3}{2}(X_{[75]} - X_{[25]}$$

Outlier: A value in the data that falls outside of the fenced value calculated by the equations above will be shown as a single separated dot.

For interpretation, the boxed part of the plot contains 50 percent of all observations within the data. The whiskers on each side represent additional variation that can be found within the data. Smaller box plot indicates smaller variation around the central point of the data. Length of the whiskers indicate the way the data is skewing. Longer whiskers means that the data is skewing more in one direction, or that the data variates in both directions. The outliner point shows one or multiple values that does not fit within the current picture.

ENDNOTES

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